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CIA, State hedge on story about clandestine aid

BY A WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF WRITER

CIA and State Department spokesmen yesterday hedged their denials of a Newsweek story that the agency's covert activities division was helping insurgencies in Angola and Kampuchea.

A CIA spokesman told The Washington Times he was "pretty sure we can deny" the report of covert aid going to rebel forces in Angola, and that "we follow the law."

U.S. aid to rebel groups in that country has been unlawful since 1975, when Congress passed the so-called

Clark amendment, barring clandestine anti-government activities in Angola.

Sources close to Chester Crocker, assistant secretary of state for African affairs, told The Times recently that, under an agreement reached by roving Ambassador Vernon Waters, the United States would exchange diplomatic relations with the Angolan government once it announced a phased withdrawal of Cuban troops from the country.

State Department spokesman Alan Romberg said, since the Clark amend-

ment was still in effect, he assumed the report of CIA aid "must be untrue."

South African sources told The Times last month the UNITA movement of Jonas Savimbi, which operates mostly in southern Angola, and the Front for the National Liberation of Angola, which operates in the north, have received Soviet weaponry captured from Palestinian forces by Israel in Lebanon last year, with Israel being paid for the arms by the United States and the weapons being passed on by South Africa.

CIA and State Department spokesmen would neither confirm nor deny the Newsweek claim that the CIA was furnishing arms through China to the forces of Pol Pot, the ousted dictator of Kampuchea, who reportedly killed about one-third of the country's 6 million people while he was in power.

"We don't comment on such allegations," said CIA spokesman Dale Peterson.

Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge movement is part of an alliance of movements resisting the government in Phnom Penh, which is under the protection of

Vietnamese forces which are opposed by the United States, China and the five-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The Newsweek cover story, "The Secret Warriors: The CIA is Back in Business," said officers of the CIA's covert branch had increased from about 300 to over 1,000 in the past two years. Covert support was said to be going to resistance and terror groups in Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Chad and Afghanistan, where the Mujaheddin guerrillas were to have received \$100 million in military and economic aid.

"I can't confirm everything in that story," said Peterson of the Newsweek cover. "The stuff about covert activity didn't come from here."